Cornwall

Dunkirk

Return



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Foreword

This article has an intended audience of the members of Cornish Associations (CAs), but many others are likely to find it interesting. For the benefit of other readers, a few words of explanation here about CAs are appropriate. A Cornish Association is simply a group of people who are Cornish born, or who have Cornish ancestors or who simply wish they had, and who want to maintain and promote Cornish heritage. Australia has 10 CAs operating in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. As well, across the world, there are 13 such associations in the United Kingdom, 14 in the USA, 3 in Canada, 4 in New Zealand and 1 in the Republic of South Africa.

As newsletter editor for one of the Australian CAs, *'The Southern Sons of Cornwall*', I was ever on the lookout for interesting material to include in my periodic publication. On looking through one of my favourite magazines '*Cornishworld*" during March 2009, I saw a little article that announced May/June 2010 to be the 70th anniversary of that dramatic historic event, the Dunkirk evacuation. It occurred to me that here was the essence of a 300 or 400 word article for my newsletter, recounting Cornwall's participation. But it didn't turn out that way. The more I read about this, the more I wanted to know, so the more research I undertook. What is to be read here is the aggregation of input from many people without whose co-operation I could not have achieved anything. The names of these wonderful people are listed alphabetically in the chapter '*Acknowledgements*'.

In order to better understand the intent of this article, it has been necessary to provide a very brief overview of elements of the whole Dunkirk episode. Relating this to Cornwall's contribution could cause a reader to discount this as insignificant and not worthy of comment. Should this occur, it must be recognised that Cornwall's population is only 0.9% of the total UK population. Additionally, comparing the number of Little Ships that may have been available from the few ports in Cornwall with those of the much bigger, and wealthier, ports of Plymouth, Weymouth, Poole, Southampton, Portsmouth, Folkestone, Dover, Ramsgate and particularly locations such as the Isle of Wight and the Thames to name some, there is little doubt that Cornwall's contribution was commensurate with its ability to respond.

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Using an old Aussie expression, I'll bet pounds to peanuts that there will be errors and omissions in the following text, and I welcome such being communicated to me.

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Berowra Heights NSW Australia
March 2010

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Introduction

Much has been recorded about the Dunkirk evacuation. Appendices 1 & 2 list some of this material. Briefly, the background to this remarkable event began in the Spring of 1939 with Germany's invasion of European nations. Some claim that the conditions imposed by the Allies on Germany in the Versailles Treaty of 1919 were the seed of discontent that grew over the next 20 years in a very powerful, highly organised and extremely determined nation intent on avenging perceived unfair treatment. Following the German occupation of Poland, on 3rd September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany, and immediately sent the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to France to join with the French forces, to halt the continuing German army advances. However, such was the strength of the German military that in the short space of time to mid May 1940, approximately half a million Allied troops had been forced back to the English Channel at Dunkirk, and were facing total defeat.

On May 20th 1940, plans were put in place to evacuate surplus BEF personnel, base unit, hospital staff, and other miscellaneous staff , but the evacuation of very large forces was considered unlikely. However the situation deteriorated so rapidly that decisions were taken on May 23rd to withdraw all BEF from France immediately, and implementation of the previously compiled plans was begun. The evacuation commenced officially at 6.57 am Saturday 26th May 1940[1]

The British plan was code named Operation Dynamo. There were many aspects to this, such as delaying the German advance where possible, protecting the troops while the evacuation proceeded, organizing sea transport across the English channel and organizing dispersal and accommodation for the tens of thousands scheduled to arrive in English ports every day.

For three reasons, transporting the beleaguered troops from Dunkirk posed real problems. One, the obvious, was the determined German advance destroying Allied troops and equipment, as well as strafing Allied ships approaching and departing Dunkirk. A second problem was Dunkirk harbour facilities, where the seven modern dock basins had been destroyed. Thus there were no docking facilities for large ships, which had to stand off some distance from the shore and to use their lifeboats to bring the troops aboard. The third reason was the unavailability of adequate numbers of suitable vessels to undertake the task.

The first of these three matters was addressed and the German advance was temporarily slowed down. Rear-guard action, largely by French ground forces supported by units of the BEF, and action by the R.A.F., made matters difficult for the advancing German forces. This was not without considerable costs. One such was the maritime loss of six destroyers, 8 personnel ships, a sloop, 5 minesweepers, 17 trawlers, a hospital ship and 188 lesser and small vessels.[1]

To understand how the other two problems were addressed, a brief explanation of the Dunkirk area is necessary. The approach to the harbour was through two very long comparatively flimsy narrow piers or moles, built out from the shore into the English Channel. Each mole was no more than 2 metres wide, and had no ship berthing facilities such as bollards. One, the eastern mole, was almost a mile long. An astute R.N officer, Captain William Tennant, speculated that a ship of up to 2,000 tons could be carefully manoeuvred to lie in the water alongside the outer limits of the eastern mole, and despite the wind and tide movements be able to take aboard the human cargo. This was tested successfully with the Thames motor vessel "*Queen of the Channel",* 1040 tons gross.[2] In fact, the strategy was so successful that 239,555 troops were taken from Dunkirk in this manner.[3]

The solution to the third problem had an unplanned but most fortuitous background. Earlier in 1939, the Admiralty had created the Small Vessels Pool. The role was to provide harbour duties, and because of their timber construction these little vessels were ideal being used as minesweepers to detect magnetic mines being dropped by German E Boats. This became the nucleus of the Little Ships. The BBC news at 9.00 am 14th May requested that owners of all self propelled pleasure craft from 30 to 100 feet in length send particulars to the Admiralty. Many of these were accepted by the Admiralty to join those in the Small Vessels Pool. Thus the armada of Little Ships was created and which within a few days sailed to Dunkirk[4]

The Little Ships role was to go right in to the shallow waters of the Dunkirk beaches to pick up troops wading out in to the sea. With a full load down to the gunnels, the Little Ships would take their human cargo to larger vessels lying off shore in deeper water, or if considered sea worthy, would proceed directly to Dover, Ramsgate or Margate. This strategy was responsible for the rescue of 98,671 troops[5] .

The route from Dunkirk to the English ports was not straightforward because of German laid mines, shore based bombardment and daylight air attacks. Three mineswept channels were created to permit safe passage. Route Z was 39 sea miles, running west from Dunkirk then north west to Dover. Route X was 55 sea miles, running west from Dunkirk , then north then north west to the North Goodwin Sands, thence to Ramsgate. Route Y was 87 sea miles running east from Dunkirk, then north east to Kwinte Buoy, then west to Ramsgate or Margate. With the vessels absolutely loaded to capacity and therefore forced to proceed slowly, it can be understood that these journeys were not only very hazardous but could take anything up to 24 hours for the smaller vessels.

In total, approximately 1,432 ships of all sizes answered the call, perhaps 650 of these being what has become known as the Dunkirk Little Ships. These will be discussed in chapter 2. Just a few of the types of larger vessels were passenger ships and ferries, cargo ships, paddle steamers, Dutch schuits (scoots), tugs, barges, lighters, as well as several types of R.N ships such as destroyers, sloops, minesweepers, Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) and corvettes. Interestingly, 23 elderly paddle steamers also gave valuable service. One of these, the *Medway Queen,* is specially mentioned below

The whole exercise took 9 days and nights, and rescued 338,226 Allied soldiers. The last ship to leave was the old and battered destroyer *Shikari* which departed Dunkirk's east mole at 3.45 am Monday 3rd June.[6] Winston Churchill declared the 9 day and night event to be 'a miracle of deliverance.'

There are countless reports of extraordinary successes, the following being just two of these. In 1924 at Ailsa boatyard Troon on the Firth of Clyde, Scotland, the paddle steamer *Medway Queen* was launched and fitted out for passenger travel. She was 180 feet long, 24 feet wide, had a draught of 5 feet 6 inches and displaced 316 tons. For comparison, in year 2009 the fleet of Lady class Sydney ferries, those that typically do the inner Sydney Harbour runs to Greenwich, Cockatoo Island etc, are slightly larger with a displacement of 383 tons. In the nine days between May 29th and June 4th, under the command of Lt. A.T. Cook R.N.R., this little old paddle steamer made 7 crossings between Dunkirk and Dover, saving the lives of 7,000 soldiers.[7] On every occasion she was attacked by German fighter aircraft, but managed to survive.

In 1929 the R.N.L.I lifeboat *Prudential* was built by Saunders at Cowes I. of W. She was 48 feet 6 inches in length and had a beam of 13 feet. That is roughly 3 times the length and twice the width of a Holden Commodore sedan. She drew only 3 feet 10 inches and displaced 19 tons. On Thursday 30th May 1940 her coxswain Howard Knight acquired 7 wherries (little rowing boats), filled them with drinking water and food, then towed them across the channel to the Dunkirk beaches. Here, with the aid of naval ratings, the wherries were filled with 8 soldiers at a time and ferried out to the waiting *Prudential* which then took them to deeper water for transfer to larger ships. They worked in this manner all night, finally heading back to Ramsgate towing a number of smaller vessels all laden with troops. The result of the continuous 40 hours effort, regularly being strafed by German aircraft, was the rescue of 800 men.

Neither *Medway Queen* nor *Prudential* were Cornish vessels, but their records typify the courage and determination of all the men who manned these Little Ships.

End Notes
1. The Nine Days of Dunkirk . Divine
2. The Ships That Saved an Army. Plummer R.
3. The Ships That Saved an Army. Plummer R.
4. The Nine Days of Dunkirk. Divine D.
5. The Ships that Saved an Army. Plummer R.
6. The Nine Days of Dunkirk. Divine D.
7. The Ships That Saved an Army. Plummer R.

Chapter 1. The Little Ships of Dunkirk

These were pleasure yachts and motor boats, motor yachts, RNLI lifeboats, fishing boats, oyster smacks, drifters, cockle boats, crabbers, trawlers, gaff cutters, Cornish luggers, to name a few. The smallest was the 15 foot long fishing boat *Tamzine*, now in the British War Museum.[1] Collectively these small craft earned the title of *The Little Ships of Dunkirk.*

The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS) website (see Appendix 2) lists 237 Little Ships as surviving members of this association. A comprehensive list of 634 of these vessels, including those 73 destroyed at Dunkirk, is contained in pages 228 to 234 inclusive of Christian Brann's excellent book *The Little Ships of Dunkirk*. Regarding numbers, see author's note at the end of this chapter.

As indicated in the Introduction, because of the destruction of the dock basins, the port of Dunkirk had quite literally no capacity for medium sized vessels such as destroyers, corvettes and merchant ships, so to improve the evacuation process, many of the Little Ships were deployed outside the port along Dunkirk's beaches as far as La Panne in the shallow waters. The sandy beaches of Dunkirk where the troops assembled to board the vessels are long and gently sloping. The smaller Little Ships typically drew 4 or 5 feet of water while the larger vessels drew 7 or 8 feet. To be safe from becoming stranded on the sand, or from being holed by a protruding rock while riding up and down on the waves even the very small vessels had to stand off from the shore for some hundreds of yards in many cases. Thus to get aboard these ships the troops had to wade out up to their necks in water, weighted down with water sodden uniforms, equipment, rifle, often being machine gunned by swooping German fighter aircraft. Some drowned in the attempt, many gained the safety of the ships, some died of wounds on the return voyage to England.

With as many soldiers as possible aboard and with the sea lapping the gunwales, a boat would set off either for a larger vessel waiting further out to sea for transfer of the human cargo, or sail direct to Dover, Folkestone, Margate or Ramsgate. Depending upon a number of variables such as wind velocity and direction, the tide movement and sea currents, harassment from German aircraft and of course the vessel's capability, a journey Dunkirk to England could take anything between 2 and 24 hours. (Typical transit time of a passenger ferry in the 21st century is about an hour) Some of these Little Ships made 4 and more voyages during the 9 days and nights of the evacuation.

Following the war, the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS) was established in 1965 to perpetuate the memory of the gallant men who manned these vessels, and through the continued existence of these Little Ships, recognize their significant contribution to British history. The ADLS website, www.adls.org.uk lists 237 by name believed to exist, with some details of each of these vessels. Approximately 73 were destroyed by enemy fire at or near Dunkirk. Some have since ceased to exist through a number of causes such as neglect, accident and lack of funds to restore them. Many cannot be located. Others have been lovingly cared for and are prized possessions of their present owners.

As well as the ADLS dedicated work, the Dunkirk Little Ships Restoration Trust exists to assist in the preservation of those surviving Little Ships. Contact details of both these organizations are shown in Appendix 2. Since 1965, every 5 years a re-enactment of the evacuation by about 50 surviving Little Ships is organized by the ADLS. The next such event is scheduled for May/June 2010, the 70th anniversary of the 1940 historic event. As well, during the May Spring Bank Holiday each year, the ADLS conducts a regatta of about 50 Little Ships as an event to remember and to recognise the many achievements of the 1940 evacuation[3]. It is interesting that one of the aims of both of these organizations is that there will be a number of Little Ships which will have survived to participate in the 100th anniversary during May/June 2040.

The Dunkirk Little Ships have been awarded a very special honour. Other than Admirals of the Royal Navy only these vessels have the right, when cruising together in company or on special occasions, to fly the Cross of St. George, a plain red cross on a white field on the jackstaff, which is located at the vessel's bow. Also this ensign has had the Dunkirk city crest added to form the ADLS house flag which is worn by ADLS members' ships on the starboard yard arm as a public sign of pride.[2]

Chapter 2 immediately following this chapter deals with those Little Ships with known Cornish connections, as well as those who volunteered but for different reasons were precluded from actual participation in Operation Dynamo. In this context, Cornish connection means any Cornish built ship pre 1940, or Cornish owned ship during 1940.

Author's Note

Considering the mayhem which pervaded those nine days and nights, it is surprising how much information was recorded for posterity. Different written accounts have much consistent material, but the inevitable discrepancies occur. As examples, David Divine in his book *The Nine Days of Dunkirk* lists 587 small craft by name (the Little Ships), 66 of which were sunk at Dunkirk. Christian Brann however lists in his book *The Little Ships of Dunkirk* 632 Little Ships, 73 of which were sunk at Dunkirk. In his book *Epic of Dunkirk*, E.K. Chatterton lists by name 422 small vessels, not including RNLI boats. Chatterton comments "A complete account of every small craft which took part in the evacuation of Dunkirk will never be known. Some just disappeared leaving no record". Another anomaly lies in the *Wikipedia* report of the Dunkirk Evacuation wherein quote "Others (soldiers) were ferried from the beaches to the larger ships, and thousands were carried back to England by the famous Little Ships of Dunkirk, a flotilla of around 700 merchant marine boats, fishing boats, pleasure craft and Royal National Lifeboat Institution lifeboats" unquote. Yet another discrepancy lies in the *Wikipedia* report of over 200 Allied craft being sunk, whereas David Divine names a total of 135, including the 66 Little Ships. Regarding total vessels attending Dunkirk, Christian Brann researched 1,432, whereas David Divine has named 1,081. As Chatterton stated, the exact numbers may never known.

Notes
1. The Little Ships of Dunkirk. Brann Christian
2. The Ships That Saved an Army. Plummer Russell.

Chapter 2. The Cornish Little Ships by Name

This chapter provides some details of those Cornish Little Ships known and believed to have contributed to the success of Operation Dynamo. Not all made it to Dunkirk, but under the direction of their respective skippers and crews, all volunteered their service. For this all deserve recognition. The vessels are:

Vessel Name	ADLS	List B	List D	List C	List HP	
Adeline		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Anne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Boy George					Porthleven	
Caronia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Curlew		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Emma					Looe	
Enegetic (sic)					Porthleven	
Firefly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Glitter II			Yes			
Ibis					Porthleven	
Iris					Looe	
John Wesley					Looe	
Maid Marion		Yes	Yes	Yes	Porthleven	Originally Westward
Manxman					Looe	
Mary		Yes	Yes			
Mata Hari		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Mayflower			Yes	Yes		
Mirasol				Yes		
Ocean Swell					Porthleven	
Our Boys					Looe	
Our Daddy					Looe	
Our Girls					Looe	
Our Lizzie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Peggy IV		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Penrose					Porthleven	
Providence	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Silver Spray		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Snowdrop					Porthleven	
Talisman					Looe	
The Biddy					Porthleven	
The Britania (sic)						
The Lowes					Porthleven	
The Mew					Dartmouth	

In the table above, the column headed ADLS shows that the vessel is a member of the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships (ADLS). The column headed List B shows those vessels listed in Christian Brann's book, *The Little Ships of Dunkirk*. The column headed List D shows those vessels listed in David Divine's book "*The Nine Days of Dunkirk*". The column headed List C shows vessels listed in E.K. Chatterton's book *Epic of Dunkirk*. The column headed List HP identifies the home port, not necessarily the port of registration, of the vessel

Approximately 200 Little Ships were rejected by the Admiral in command of the Small Vessels Pool as being "unsuitable for the Dunkirk operations". Typical reasons were small size and lack of suitable engine power. Those shown above without author confirmation are examples of this.

The Little Ships – Possible Operation Dynamo Connection

The following is a list of ships where anecdotal evidence suggests they were part of Operation Dynamo, and had Cornish connections. Proof of these associations has yet to be discovered.

Adeline
Boy George
Curlew
Energetic
Firefly
Glitter II
Guide of Dunkirk
Ibis
Mary
Mata Hari
Mayflower
Mirasol
Peggy IV
Penrose
Silver Spray
Snowdrop
The Biddy
The Britania
The Lowes
The Mew

In the following descriptions, the references are as follows:

A. Ministry of War List
B. The Nine Days of Dunkirk by A.D. Divine
C. The Epic of Dunkirk by E.K. Chatterton
D. The Little Ships of Dunkirk by Christian Brann
E. National Museum Cornwall
F. The ships that saved and army by Russell Plummer
G. The ADLS website www.adls.org.au
H. Tough Brothers records
I. Phillip Simons, Lloyds Register London
J. Dunkirk Veterans" List
K. Dunkirk by A.D. Divine
L. Admiralty List

The Little Ships - Details

Adeline

A motor launch built by Frank Curtis, year NK at Looe. Listed by ADLS as a Little Ship but not a member. References: A. B. C. D. E.

Anne

A motor yacht built by Frank Curtis in 1925 at Looe. Carvel construction of pine on oak. Length 30 feet 4 inches. Beam 8 feet 11 inches. Draft 3 feet 3 inches. Displacement NK. Engine(s) Ailsa Craig petrol/paraffin.. Had 2 screws. Owner(s) P.J. Darby of Stourbridge. Listed by ADLS as a Little Ship. Member of ADLS. References: A. D. G. H. I.



Anne

Boy George

Not listed as a Little Ship and not an ADLS member. Anecdotal evidence from David and Jayne Pascoe of Porthleven that *Boy George* and other vessels sailed from Porthleven towards Dunkirk, only to be turned back (by whom not known but possibly by the Admiralty) because it was believed that there were sufficient ships which had already gone ahead from Mevagissey and Falmouth. Further to this it has been reported by Martin Matthews of Helston that Porthleven boats fitted with wheelhouses were ordered to proceed to Fowey to help with the Dunkirk evacuation. William Charles Arthur, along with the crew of *Boy George* were accompanied by other boats from Porthleven where fishermen refused to take their boats stating that they were not built to land on beaches. They then volunteered to man naval vessels moored in the river, as most of these fishermen had served in WW1 and were familiar with the naval vessels. Their offer was declined and they were ordered to return to Porthleven.



Caronia

Caronia

Auxiliary ketch built by Henry, Theodore and Sidney Peake in 1927 at Tolcarne Newlyn. Length 39 feet 9 inches. Beam 11 feet 5 inches. Displacement 4 feet 6 inches. Draft 25 tons. Engine one 26 HP Kelvin in the centre and one 13 HP port side. Owner(s) GBSB Burleigh in 1939. Registered in London. Listed as a Little Ship and a member of the ADLS. Her engines were fitted after launching by Tressiders of St Ives. When first built she was fitted with tiller for steering, and had a mizzen lug sail. In September 1939 she was in Le Havre harbour and her skipper decided she should get away from France “with dispatch”. No details are on record of her exploits at Dunkirk other than she

survived German aircraft strafing. With her broad beam, shallow draft and 2 engines she was well suited to inshore rescue operations. References: B.C.D.F.G.I.J.K.

Curlew

Listed as a Little Ship but not an ADLS member. References: A.C.D.E.K..



Firefly

Firefly

A motor yacht built by Cole Wiggins at location NK in 1923. Listed as a Little Ship and ADLS member. Length 26 feet. Beam 7 feet 9 inches. Draft 2 feet 10 inches. Displacement 5.71 tons. Carvel construction. Engine 1.5 L diesel. On 26 May 1940 Corporal Dennis Kinnell of the RASC and four colleagues swam out to *Firefly* pulling a seriously wounded casualty, and they all scrambled over *Firefly'*s transom to get aboard. They were then taken to deeper water and transferred to the RN Destroyer HMS *Anthony*, which took them and others to Dover. In 1995 the then Major Dennis Kinnell reported this to the owner Brian Green. The National Maritime Museum Cornwall advises *Firefly* was a harbour launch prior to Dunkirk. References: D. E. G.

Glitter II

R.N.L.I. lifeboat built 1930 by Thornycroft. Owner(s) P. Coode of St Austel .Not listed as a Little Ship & not an ADLS member. References :B.D.E.J.K.L.

Ibis

As per *Boy George* comments

Maid Marion

Cornish lugger built by Percy Mitchell at Portmellon in 1925. Length 39 feet 6 inches. Beam 13 feet. Draft 5 feet. Displacement 18 tons. Construction pitch pine on oak. Engines(s) Ford 6 cylinder 20 HP diesel engine. Owner(s) 1935 herring fishermen brothers Joe & Herbert Husband. Listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. In 1940 the owner John Orchard set sail for Dunkirk to participate in Operation Dynamo, but was too late and was diverted to Le Havre. Here he picked up a load of soldiers and brought them to England. References: A. D.



Maid Marion

Mary (Hilda)

Auxiliary cutter built in Fowey. Length 30 feet. Beam 10 feet. Draft 5 feet. Bergius engine. Listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. Registered at Fambridge. References: A.D.E.I.J.

Mata Hari

Auxiliary yawl built at Falmouth. Owner(s) 1940 J.W. Limtott .Listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. References: A.B.C.D.E.H.J.K.

Mayflower

Built at Looe in 1904 by Pearce. 1940 owner J Runcie. Listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. References: A.B.C.D.E.J.K..

Mirasol

Auxiliary yawl. Built by Pascoe & Sons 1924 at St. Just. Length 28 feet 5 inches. Beam 9 feet 6 inches. Draft 4 feet. Engine 6 cylinder Gines Universal fitted in 1934. 1940 owner R.C.Kyle. Registered in London. Not listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. References: E. I.

Our Lizzie

Auxiliary Ketch built by W. Oliver in 1920 at Mounts Bay Porthleven. Length 46 feet. Beam 14 feet. Draft 6 feet. Displacement 19.6 tons. Perkins 4-236 diesel engine driving a single screw. Listed as a Little Ship. Member of the ADLS. After commissioning, *Our Lizzie* was rigged with a small lug sail forrard and a gaff mizzen aft. For the first 17 years she sailed out of St Ives as a Drifter, working the fishing grounds in St Georges Channel as far as the eastern end of the Atlantic Ocean. By the time of Dunkirk she had been converted to a sailing yacht. Details of her Dunkirk service are not known other that she was there. Since the war she has had several owners some of whom have made her available to feature in BBC TV productions such as The French Lieutenant's Woman, Dracula and The Onedin Line. References: A.B.C.D.F.I.J.K..

Peggy IV

Admiralty cutter from Porthleven. Listed as a Little Ship. Not an ADLS member. Peggy IV was sunk at Dunkirk. References: A.B.C.D.J.K.L.



Providence



The Mew

Chapter 3. The People

Following are people who were directly and indirectly involved in the evacuation:

Arthur William C.	Skipper of *Boy George*
Bowden Frank	Crew of *Inez*
Bowden Matt	Crew of *Inez*
Chegwiden Bill	Crew of *Inez*
Coode P.	Owner of *Glitter II* in 1939
Cowl	Boat builder Padstow. Built Cornish auxiliary cutter *Silver Spray* in 1903 (see Slade)
Cowles G.H.	Owner of The *Britania* (sic) 1939
Curtis Frank.	Boat builder at Looe. Built the motor yacht *Anne* in 1925, and motor launch *Adeline* .
Dick W.	One time owner of *Silver Spray* pre 1940 (See Cowl & Slade)
Eagles W.A.	One time owner of *Silver Spray* pre 1940 (See Cowl & Slade)
Hosking Edward J.	Owner & skipper of *Ocean Swell*
Hosking Joseph	Mate of *Ocean Swell*
Hosking Wesley	Owner Skipper *Snowdrop*
Kylie R.C.	Owner of *Mirasol* in 1939
Limtott J.W.	Owner of *Mata Hari* in 1939
MacFarlane I.C.	Owner of *Curlew* in 1939.
Mathaed Robert	Crew of *Maid Marion*
McQueen J.	One time owner of *Silver Spray* pre 1940 (See Cowl & Slade)
Mitchell Percy	Boat builder Portmellon. Built the Cornish Lugger *Maid Marion* in 1925.
Oliver	Boat builder Mounts Bay Porthleven. Built the auxiliary ketch *Our Lizzie* in 1920. Also with partner Gilbert built the auxiliary gaff cutter *Providence* in 1934
Orchard John Lukies	Skipper *Maid Marion*
Peake Henry	Boat builder Tolcarne Newlyn. With brothers Theodore and Sidney built the auxiliary ketch *Caronia* in 1927
Richards Gilbert	Crew *Energetic*
Richards John Henry	Crew *Energetic*
Richards Thomas	Crew *Energetic*
Richards William	Crew *Energetic*
Runcie J.	Owner of *Mayflower* in 1939
Shaw G.R.	Owner of *Mary* in 1939
Slade	Boat builder Polruan. Built Cornish auxiliary cutter *Silver Spray* in 1935 (see Cowl)
Toy William	Uncle of Thomas Richards
Williams Leonard	Crewman of *Ocean Swell*

Chapter 4. More Cornish Stories

Research into Cornwall's participation in Operation Dynamo has revealed some interesting stories. Here are some.

Looe Fishing Fleet

At 4.30 am 15th June 1940 the skippers and crews of the Looe fishing fleet had only just turned in to bed after a night of fishing, when they were roused by the police and told to get their vessels ready for a long sea trip. They were to take on stores and drinking water for a certain number of days. Soon there were scenes of petrol and paraffin being loaded into the holds, women bustling to and fro with huge pasties and square biscuit tins packed with saffron cakes and other eatables, and oil skins, buckets and other essential articles for an extended voyage.

Crowds of people packed the quayside as the fishing vessels, *John Wesley*, *Iris*, *Our Girls*, *Our Daddy*, *Our Boys*, *Emma*, *Manxman* and *Talisman* set off for Plymouth. Arriving at Plymouth, they moored at the Barbican Basin to await further instructions, all the while speculating final destinations of Le Havre, Brest and even Bordeaux. During their wait they were signed on into the Royal Naval Reserve, and issued with steel helmets, gas masks and rifles. Finally after four days of standing by, they were stood down, and instructed to return to Looe on 19th June.[1]

Ron Rashleigh, retired Shipwright at Constantine Falmouth, comments (1 July 2009) that whereas the Admiralty provided the weaponry, the crews had to provide their own provisions.

Author's note. Considering that Operation Dynamo concluded on June 3rd, one has to wonder why, 12 days after this, the Admiralty considered it necessary to 'scramble' this little fleet, and then to hold them in Plymouth harbour for another 4 days before standing them down.

Jim Thompson

Jim's dad was a Dunkirk Veteran. On his return to UK he was sent to a camp at Badgers Cross which was between Gulval and Nancledra, about 4 miles to the north east of Penzance. Jim says that it is because of the Little Ships, he was born into this world. Jim's dad died when Jim was just 7 months old. Jim also recounts that his mother's sister married a Belgian who escaped to Newlyn where there was a large Belgian community. During this voyage the boat was strafed by German fighter aircraft, and the Belgian's father was hit and died before the boat reached Newlyn.

Ocean Swell

Elizabeth Gilbert of Porthleven has reported (June 2009) that her father, Edward John Hosking, his brother Joseph and crew member Leonard Williams sailed from Porthleven in Edward's crabber *Ocean Swe*ll, but she was considered too small and was sent back. Elizabeth is a relative of Marion after whom *Maid Mario*n was named.

Boy George

Reported by Martyn Matthews of Helston (June 2009), Porthleven boats fitted with wheelhouses were ordered to Fowey to help with the Dunkirk evacuation. William Charles Arthur along with his crew aboard *Boy George*, and accompanied by other Porthleven boats were ordered to proceed to Fowey where they anchored on the River Fowey. Charles Arthur and other Porthleven men refused to take their boats to Dunkirk as they said the boats were not built for beach landings. They then volunteered to man Naval vessels which were moored in the river, as most of these fishermen had served in WW1 and were familiar with naval vessels. Their offer was refused and they were ordered to return to Porthleven.

Porthleven Fleet

The following is a verbatim report by Phyllis Arthur, Colarth, Unity Road, Porthleven Helston Cornwall TR13 9DA, United Kingdom in July 2009, and which supports Martyn Matthews report about *Boy George*. Phillis Arthur is author of the book "*Porthleven – Through the Changing Scenes*", published 2007.

"I was only three at the time of Dunkirk and was suffering from a bad attack of whooping cough! However, I do remember my father, along with other fishermen in the village of Porthleven Cornwall being ordered to take their boats to Fowey, which is half way along the south Cornwall coast. Only the larger fishing boats that had wheelhouses went to Fowey and they moored their boats in the River Fowey. There they joined fishermen from other Cornish fishing villages.
The fishermen elected a Committee to meet the Authorities (my father was on the Committee). They were asked to "volunteer" their boats to sail to Dunkirk to help with the evacuation of Servicemen from the beaches. The Porthleven fishermen pointed out that their boats were unsuitable for such a task – beaching them would almost certainly have meant that , not only would their lives be in danger, but they would probably not have been able to rescue anyone. The fishermen did however volunteer to crew some naval vessels moored in the River Fowey but their offer was not accepted. (Most Porthleven fishermen had been in the First World War and were acquainted with the naval vessels.) Instead they were told to return home.

On the way home one of the boats, owned by Messrs Edward John and Joe Hosking, sailed near to the village of Coverack so that they could be seen by their sister who lived there. She got word to the Porthleven villagers and, by the time the boats reached the harbour, quite a reception party had formed to welcome them. (My great aunt "ordered" her husband who was over ninety years of age to go to the end of the road on a route my father would take home. The old man was not to return until he had spoken to my father).

My father told me later that the Porthleven fishermen refused to take their boats to Dunkirk as the design of their boats was unsuitable (the boats had different shaped hulls from some of the other boats as Porthleven was a tidal harbour. When they were at anchor, "legs" were fitted to the side of the boats so that they did not go over on their sides at low tide. Beaching the boats would undoubtedly have been disastrous".

Life Savers

Seventeen Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) boats from ports on the south coast of England such as Poole, Newhaven, Eastbourne, Hastings, were assembled in Dover harbour on Thursday 30th May. One of these was brand new and destined for Cadgwith. All 17 boats were responsible for saving thousands of soldiers at Dunkirk. The Hythe boat was sunk, and all others damaged. Some weeks after Operation Dynamo concluded, Cadgwith finally took possession of its lifeboat. Repairs to these boats, plus replacement of the Hythe boat and replacement of the stores and equipment cost £8,000 (1940 money), all of which was carried by the R.N.L.I.[2]

The Coode Family

The following is from Cathy and Alan Coode of Cornwall. When doing research on a topic such as this one of "Cornwall Dunkirk Return", it is often important to include information that does not appear to be immediately related to the subject matter, because at some later date, new information may make the apparently unrelated information quite pertinent. Such is the situation with the Coode family and the Little Ship *Glitter II* (See *Glitter II* in chapter 2).

Between 28 July and 25 September 2009, collectively Taryn Harris and Sarah Lloyd of the Royal Cornwall Museum, Angela Broome of the Royal Institute of Cornwall, Cathy and Alan Coode and brother Bryan Coode, Cornish residents, pooled their knowledge of the Coode family's past association with small ships.

Peter Coode was a member of the BEF, was wounded in action twice and retreated with his unit to Brest from where he was evacuated to Britain. Thus he may not have been directly associated with Operation Dynamo. Percival Coode was part of the Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry Territorial Army (DCLITA) and not a sailor. Phillip Melvill Coode born 29 January 1870 was a solicitor in St Austell and enjoyed boating and sailing. He would have been aged 70 during Operation Dynamo, and unlikely, but not impossibly, to have been involved in the evacuation. P.M. Coode owned successively a 14 foot open boat, a 2½ ton cutter which he built himself, a 5 ton cutter named *Martlett,* an auxiliary yawl named *Petrel*, and finally in 1907 a 13 ton auxiliary yawl named *Skirmish*. *Skirmish* was built by Roberts of Mevagissey to P.M's design. P.M. belonged to the Royal Fowey and Royal Western yacht clubs. To date, no connection with *Glitter II* has been established, and it is surmised that the P Coode name associated with *Glitter II* is from another branch of the Coode family.

Despite this, the author believes that because of the St Austell association and the fact that the family name of Coode is not common, there remains a distinct possibility of some connection

The vessel names *Martlett*, *Petrel* and *Skirmish* do not appear in any of the Little Ships official lists.

John Southern, Looe

John, a septuagenarian Looe resident and historian in 2009 advises that there are no old fishermen left in Looe. Vera Pearce of Morval, age 90 at the time of writing this, tells John of *Mayflower* built 1904 by Richard Pearce for Henry Solt of East Looe. John further advises that *Mayflower* was sold before WW2 to someone in the IoW where she was converted to a yacht. The following is from John:

"I.R.I.S. was the name formed by the initials of family names. *I.R.I.S.* FY375 was taken to Plymouth by Frank Pengelly. *John Wesley FY35 & Daddy FY7* are still in Looe, having been converted to yachts. Terry Pengelley, son of *Our Daddy*'s original skipper confirms she never went to Dunkirk. *Talisman FY242* was wrecked on the rocks at Par ca 1950. *Manxman FY13* was later sold and had her name changed."

Further from John: "A Looe shipwright says that *Westward* was the only boat to go, and she sailed from Falmouth. She was taken further up the east coast before sailing. The Looe luggers including *Iverna* also went to Plymouth. The boats were moored in two trots of three, and 6 shipwrights from Devonport dockyard worked on boarding over the net holds . They worked two on a boat and had only one saw between the six of them, so the saw had to be passed from hand to hand. The luggers were unsuitable to go to Dunkirk because they had six foot draft, too much for close beach work".

Notes 1. *Extract from Cornwall at War 1939-1945* by Peter Hancock
2. *The Epic of Dunkirk.* Chatterton E.K.

Thomas Gerald Richards

Following is a verbatim copy of a letter written by Thomas Gerald Richards of West Hallam during February 2010.

What I have to tell you may be helpful to your project. Here are some of the Porthleven boats called to the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940. Tomorrow 12th February is my 80th birthday so I remember it well.

First my maternal grandfather's boat *Lois* PZ626. My grandfather was retired and not well. His brother Mr William Toy and others went. The *Lois* was built in 1912 by Mr William Oliver the first big boat built in that yard. Another that went was *Inez* PZ113 owned by two brothers Mr Frank Bowden and Mr Matt Bowden with them to make up a crew was a retired skipper Mr Bill Chegwiden and a young shoemaker who later joined the Navy. The young shoemaker in later life became a good friend of mine. He told me that as they left Porthleven harbour the old man said "Look at my son, because you will ne'er see him again" I don't know when the *Inez* was built. The *Maid Marion* PZ61 went with skipper own Mr John Lukies *Orchard*, Mr Robert Mathaed and others. The *Maid Marion* was built at Looe or Fowey and was first called *The Westward*. The *Snowdrop* PZ144 was shipped by owner Mr Wesley Hosking with two brothers and a brother in law. The *Snowdrop* was built in Porthleven in 1926 by Kitto. The Gilbert of Gilbert

and Pascoe was foremen in Kitto's yard and when Kitto sold out he and Pascoe bought the yard. The *Energetic* went with my father Thomas Richards and brothers William Richards, Gilbert Richards and John Henry Richards. The *Energetic* was built in 1926 by Kitto for my grandfather and four sons, after granddad retired the two younger sons came into the crew. Six brothers in one crew very unusual. They were known to be top class fishermen. In the war the two younger boys were involved in the forces, one in the navy the other on secret work. The *Energetic* was involved in a terrible tragedy on 25 June 1948 fishing about 20 miles south of The Lizard point. An American bulk carrier was steaming too fast in a dense fog without a proper lookout and cut them in half. Five were lost only one survived. A terrible tragedy for our family and the whole fishing community. I can't name any more boats that went to Dunkirk because some were laid up and the crews were in the Navy. I hope I have been of some help to you. Over many years Porthleven was famous for the workmanship in its ship building. The biggest they built were two ships for the Hudson Bay Company of Canada. Yours sincerely. Thomas Gerald Richards.

Acknowledgements – People

My sincere thanks to these wonderful people have contributed their time, energy and knowledge to the production of this article.

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Acknowledgements – Organisations

Association of Dunkirk Little Ships
Dunkirk Little Ships Restoration Trust
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Imperial War Museum London
National Library of Australia
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Tradboat Naval & Military Craft
United Kingdom Phone Books

Acknowledgements – Publications

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The Ships That Saved an Army. Russell Plummer. ISBN 1-85260-219-4
The Nine Days of Dunkirk. David Divine
The Epic of Dunkirk. E.K. Chatterton
Cornwall Newspapers *Western Morning News* at Plymouth*, West Briton* at Truro*, Cornishman* at Penzance and *Cornish Guardian* at Bodmin.

Appendix 1. Further reading

* *The Little Ships of Dunkirk* by Christian Brann, Cirencester Gloucestershire. Collectors Books 1989; ISBN 0-946604-02-9.

* *The Ships that Saved an Army*; a comprehensive record of the 1300 'little ships' of Dunkirk by Russell Plummer – Wellington Northamptonshire: Patrick Stephes, 1990; ISBN 1-85260-210-4.

* *Ministry of War Transport list*

* *The Nine Days of Dunkirk*. Divine A.D.

* *Dunkirk Veterans list*

* *Dunkirk*. Divine A.D.

* *Tough Bros Records*.

**Elkins E.F. Records*

* *Admiralty Notes of Merchant Vessels lost or Damaged 1939-1945*

* *Ships of the Royal Navy Lost or Damaged 1939-1945*

* *Supplement to the London Gazette July 1940*

* *The Epic of Dunkirk*. Chatterton E.K.

* *The Nine Days Wonder*. Masefield John

* *The Sands of Dunkirk*. Collier Richard

* *The War in France and Flanders*. Ellis. L.F.

Appendix 2. Organisations & Government Institutions

* Dunkirk Little Ships Restoration Trust. The Cottage on the Lake, Hook Shore, Warsash, Southampton SO31 9HF. UK Phone 01489 572775 Jerry Lewis. jerry.lewis@care4free.net.

* The Association of Dunkirk Little Ships. Margaret Cormack Secretary, 5 Finians Close, honey hill, Uxbridge. Middx UB10 9NW UK Phone 01895 254193. Fax 01895 813788. www.adls.org.uk/.

* Lloyds Register – Fairplay Ltd, 3 Princess Way, Redhill Surrey RH1 1UP UK. Philip Simons, Senior Analyst – New Construction Department. Direct line 44 1737 379011. Fax 44 1737 379040. 25 Greenways, Highlands Road, Portslade, Hove BN41 2BS. UK. Philip.Simons@lrfairplay.com.

* Falmouth Boat Constructions. www.falmouthboatconstructions.com/aboutus.sltml.

* The Gaffers & Luggers Association. Clive Fitch. Redgate Smithy Redgate St Cleer Cornwall PL14 6RU.

* Cornish Maritime Trust. Gordon Coombs. 47 Henson Drive Fowey Cornwall PL23 1ET.

* National Maritime Museum Cornwall

* Imperial War Museum London. iwm@reference-service.info. Question # IWM121983.

* Trad Boat, Naval & Military Craft. www.tradboat2.co.uk/editorial/naval.htm.

* National Library of Australia. www.nla.gov.au/anbd.bib-anan4772568. Reference Librarian, Information Services Russell Latham.

* Cornish Maritime Trust. Trevedow, Looe Bar Road, Porthleven, Cornwall TR13 9E1. www.cornishmaritimetrust.org.uk.

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National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Nine Days of Dunkirk. David Divine
Pascoe
Rashleigh Ron
Robinson Jill
Ships That Saved An Army. Russell Plummer
Simons Phillip
St Ives Museum Maritime
Thompson Jim
Trad Boat
Wheeler Julie (Peake)

Appendix 3. Explanations

These terminology explanations are provided for those readers who choose to read some of the source material eg books such as "*The Ships that Saved an Army*" and "*The Little Ships of Dunkirk*".

Auxiliary gaff cutter	Typically 20 feet long with a 1.3 ton displacement. Retractable centreboard. Single and double end construction
Auxiliary Ketch	A Ketch, is a small sailing vessel, with a mainmast and a smaller mizzenmast, but no foremast. The mainmast carries a topsail or a gaff topsail, and supports one or sometimes 2 jibsails. The mainmast carries a small trisail. Auxiliary simply means the sailing vessel has been fitted with an engine and propeller as an extra facility for providing forward or reverse motivation.
Beam	This is a measurement at the widest part of the vessel usually, but not always, at main deck level
Carvel	A carvel built boat has the external hull planking constructed to a smooth finish. This is generally achieved by having one layer of planks running diagonally from keel to the upper deck, butted edge to edge and covered by a second layer also from keel to the upper deck, but running diagonally in the opposite direction. As well as improving water tight integrity, this method adds considerably to the strength of the hull construction.
Centre board	For upright stability a vessel needs a keel below the waterline. Some vessels have a fixed keel, others have a retractable keel called a centre board. As the vessel approaches shallow water, to avoid going aground, the centre board can be raised into the hull. Ship stability of course is then compromised.
Clinker	A clinker built boat has the longitudinal external planking overlapping. Commencing at the keel and progressively up to the topmost plank, the clinker built planks are overlapped one on the next below, similar to the external planking on a house
Cornish lugger	Main vessel for Cornish fishing between 17th and 21st centuries. 20 to 40 feet in length, broad beam deep draughts. 2 sometimes 3 masts
Displacement	This is a calculation of the volume of water which is displaced when a vessel enters the water. Displacement will vary depending upon factors such as loading and salinity of the water. A ton of sea water has a capacity of 35 cubic feet, and for the purpose of assessing displacement mass, 35 cubic feet of ship's hull below the water line was defined as 1 ton.
Duradon	Product name for the modern brown coloured sail material replacing the old time canvas
Draft (Draught)	This is the distance between the water line and the lowest point of the vessel, usually at the bottom of the keel.
Drifter	This is the term given to fishing vessels that set their lines or nets, and let the tide and wind carry them across the fishing grounds. A trawler on the other hand would be moved across the fishing grounds by mechanical or wind power
Dutch Schuits	Dubbed by the English 'Skoots.' These were the sea going motorized versions of the towed barges so familiar on the European rivers of Danube, Elbe etc. Ahead of Holland being overrun by the Germans in 1939, about 40 of these vessels escaped to London and Poole. Being flat bottomed, motorized and built for carrying big loads, these vessels were ideal for the Dunkirk evacuation requirements
Fathom	6 feet. (1.829 metres)
Gaff	Essentially a gaff is a long slender piece of timber. When fitted with a hook at one end, it is used by hand to lift a heavy fish out of the water, or to pick up a mooring rope as the vessel approaches its berth. It is also a term to describe a particular sail on a sailing ship. Typically a gaff will be attached near the top of the main or mizzen mast, and a triangular sail, the gaff top sail, will be fixed to this and the mast
Gunnels (Gunwales).	These are the upper edges of the ship's sides. With water lapping the gunnels, the vessel is barely afloat.
Heave to	An expression meaning the ship's forward movement has ceased and the vessel is lying at rest.
Jackstaff	This is a small mast typically no more than 2 metres high mounted right at the bow of the ship on main deck level. It is used to fly special ensigns on special occasions such as the Cross of St George on an accredited Dunkirk Little Ship when participating in a reenactment ceremony.
Knot.	A knot is a measure of speed and is one nautical mile per hour.
Leeboard	Like a centreboard but lowered into the slot on the lee side of the vessel to limit unwanted vessel lateral movement
Length	Usually two lengths are given for a vessel. One is LOA which is the Length Overall and is the maximum length from bow to stern. The other is the LWL or length at the waterline. This is invariably less than the LOA.
Masts	Commencing at the bow of a sailing ship and moving aft, the first mast is the foremast, the second is the main mast and the third is the mizzen mast. A few vessels have a fourth

	mast named the jigger. The main mast is usually the tallest mast, with both the fore mast and the mizzen not as high. Some vessels do not have a small foremast, but the first mast on these vessels is still called the main mast, and the second mast aft is still called the mizzen.
Mile – Nautical	is 6080 feet or approximately 1.85 kilometres. A nautical mile is approximately the distance between 1 & 2 minutes of latitude when measured at the equator. There are 60 minutes to a degree of latitude.
Mile – Statute	is 1,760 yards or 5,280 feet.
Motor yacht	A general term for a vessel, primarily designed as a sailing ship and fitted with an engine and propeller.
Pitch pine on oak	Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida* Pinaceae) is a moderately strong coarse grained timber that has very good decay resistant properties. It is suited for use as the ribs in boat construction.
Screw	A colloquial term for propeller
Swing the compass	To navigate out of sight of land a magnetic compass was used to give direction. In a metal constructed ship, the accuracy of the compass would be substantially affected by the ferrous content of the ship's construction. To compensate for this, magnets were attached to the compass mounting (the binnacle). These were called the Flinders Bar to correct for fore and aft magnetic influence, and the quadrantal correctors to correct for the port and starboard magnetic influences. These magnets were adjusted by swinging the ship at anchor to take bearings on points of known magnetic reference resulting in a more accurate compass reading.
Ton.	This is the Imperial measure of mass. It is 2,240 pounds and is 1016 kilograms.
Transom	The bow of a boat is invariably sharp or pointed. The stern can also be pointed, and such a vessel is termed double ended. Where the stern is flat, the flat section is called the transom.
Wharfinger	The owner or keeper of a wharf
Yards, feet & inches	These are the old Imperial lineal measures. One inch is 25.4 millimetres. There are 12 inches to the foot, and 3 feet to the yard.
Yawl	Has 3 masts, fore, main and mizzen. The mizzen is small, well aft of the main mast and often right above the transom.

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